



State of Wisconsin  
Department of Public Instruction  
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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\*\*\***NEWS RELEASE**\*\*\*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Wisconsin's ACT composite score holds steady

*National composite score drops to 21.1*

MADISON—Wisconsin's 2008 graduates out performed their peers nationally, posting a composite score of 22.3 on the ACT college admissions test. The score maintains last year's increase and is well above the national composite score of 21.1, which dropped one-tenth of a point from the previous year.

"We can be proud of our 2008 graduates," said State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster. "Our college-bound students performed very well on the ACT assessment, outpacing their national peers."

The state had 46,990 graduates in public and private schools who took the ACT at some time during high school, up 560 students from last year. That number represents 67 percent of the state's high school graduates. Nationally, 1.4 million students, or 43 percent of 2008 graduates, took the ACT.

Wisconsin's composite score ranks third in the nation among the 26 ACT-taking states. Minnesota had a composite score of 22.6 with 69 percent of its graduates tested. Iowa had a composite score of 22.4 with 60 percent of its graduates taking the ACT. Three states—Colorado, Illinois, and Michigan—test virtually all of their high school juniors on the ACT as part of their statewide assessment programs. Kentucky and Wyoming also moved to full statewide testing on the ACT this past spring.

On ACT subject-area tests, Wisconsin students scored 21.7 points for English, up one-tenth of a point from last year. Nationally the score on the English test was 20.6, down one-tenth of a point. In math, Wisconsin students earned a 22.3, up one-tenth of a point from last year. Nationally the math score held the same as in 2007 at 21.0. Wisconsin's reading score was up two-tenths of a point to 22.6. The national reading score was 21.4, down one-tenth of a point from 2007. The state's science score was 22.3, down one-tenth of a point. The national science score dropped two-tenths of a point from the previous year to 20.8.

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As a measure of college readiness, ACT has established benchmark scores that predict success on credit-bearing college coursework. Students who earn an 18 or higher on the English test have a 75 percent chance of earning a C in college-level English. Wisconsin had 77 percent of its graduates earning the benchmark English score, compared to 68 percent nationally. For math, 54 percent of state students earned the benchmark score (22) compared to 43 percent nationally.

In reading, which measures preparedness for college-level social science courses, 61 percent of Wisconsin graduates earned the benchmark score of 21; nationally, 53 percent reached the benchmark score. In science, which is geared to college-level biology, 38 percent of state students earned the benchmark score of 24, 10 percentage points higher than the percentage meeting the benchmark nationally.

2008 Percentage of Students meeting ACT College-Readiness Benchmarks		
ACT Benchmark*	Wisconsin	Nation
English (18)	77	68
Math (22)	54	43
Reading (Social Sciences) (21)	61	53
Science (Biology) (24)	38	28
*A benchmark score is the minimum score needed on an ACT subject area test to indicate a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher grade in a corresponding credit-bearing college course.		

“While Wisconsin graduates performed quite well on this national assessment, we must encourage students to take coursework that will prepare them for college and the world of work,” Burmaster said. “Achievement gaps in scores and course-taking patterns are quite apparent.”

The percentage of Wisconsin ACT-takers who were students of color increased slightly from last year to 11.7 percent. African American students had a composite score of 17.0, the same as last year and one-tenth of a point higher than their peers nationally.

American Indian students had a composite score of 20.4 compared to the 19.0 composite score of their national peers. Wisconsin’s Asian students had a

composite score of 20.4, which like the national score for Asian students (22.9), was up three-tenths of a point from last year. Hispanic students from Wisconsin had a composite score of 19.7, one full point higher than the national composite score for Hispanic students. White students from the state had a

ACT Composite Scores by Race and Ethnicity

	Wisconsin				Nation			
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2005	2006	2007	2008
African American	16.9	17.0	17.0	17.0	17.0	17.1	17.0	16.9
American Indian	20.4	20.1	20.4	20.4	18.7	18.8	18.9	19.0
Asian	20.1	20.4	20.1	20.4	22.1	22.3	22.6	22.9
Hispanic	19.6	19.6	20.0	19.7	18.6	18.6	18.7	18.7
White	22.6	22.6	22.7	22.8	21.9	22.0	22.1	22.1
Other/No Response	22.5	22.2	22.8	23.1	20.9	21.1	21.6	21.7
All Students	22.2	22.2	22.3	22.3	20.9	21.1	21.2	21.1

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composite score of 22.8, up one-tenth of a point from last year and seven-tenths of a point higher than white students nationally.

Wisconsin students who reported they took a recommended college preparatory curriculum—four years of English and three or more years of mathematics, science, and social studies—had scores that averaged 1.7 points higher across the four subject-area tests than students who did not take a core curriculum for college

preparation. Nationally, students who did not take a core curriculum had scores that averaged 2.5 points lower than their peers who took more rigorous college-preparatory

**2008 ACT Scores by School Program**

	Wisconsin			Nation		
	Core Program	Less than Core	State Composite Score	Core Program	Less than Core	National Composite Score
English	22.4	20.4	21.7	21.6	18.8	20.6
Math	22.8	21.0	22.3	21.9	19.3	21.0
Reading	23.1	21.5	22.6	22.3	19.9	21.4
Science	22.7	21.3	22.3	21.6	19.4	20.8
Composite	22.9	21.2	22.3	22.0	19.5	21.1

coursework. In Wisconsin, 58 percent of graduates reported taking a core curriculum compared to 61 percent nationally.

“We are working with the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the American Diploma Project to ensure that our students have high school coursework that is rigorous and relevant to college and the work place,” Burmaster said. “Our goal is to prepare our graduates to be world ready.”

ACT bases totals for graduating seniors on projections from Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education’s March 2008 report. Wisconsin’s participation on the ACT was down 3 percentage points from last year when the projections were based on the commission’s December 2003 report.

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**NOTES:** The attached table provides additional information about ACT results. This news release is available electronically at [http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008\\_112.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpi2008_112.pdf). Please contact district or school officials for local ACT scores. Scores will be posted to the Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools later this week.

## 2008 ACT Results

Composite Scores by Racial and Ethnic Groups, School Program, and College Readiness Benchmarks

				Composite Scores		Percentage Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmark Scores			
				Core or More	Less than Core	English (18)	Mathematics (22)	Reading (21)	Science (24)
<b>Wisconsin</b>	<b>ACT Test Takers</b>	<b>Composite Score</b>	<b>Percentage Taking Core</b>						
African American	2,271	17.0	52	17.4	16.6	35	12	21	7
American Indian	318	20.4	52	21.3	19.0	60	33	50	24
Asian	1,620	20.4	59	21.1	19.2	56	42	39	23
Hispanic	1,297	19.7	56	20.4	18.6	57	30	42	17
White	36,397	22.8	60	23.3	21.7	81	57	64	40
Other/No Response	5,087	23.1	44	23.4	21.8	--	--	--	--
<b>All Students</b>	<b>46,990</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Nation</b>	<b>ACT Test Takers</b>	<b>Composite Score</b>	<b>Percentage Taking Core</b>	<b>Core or More</b>	<b>Less than Core</b>	<b>English (18)</b>	<b>Mathematics (22)</b>	<b>Reading (21)</b>	<b>Science (24)</b>
African American	178,417	16.9	58	17.7	16.0	37	11	21	5
American Indian	14,380	19.0	53	20.3	17.6	52	25	40	16
Asian	51,368	22.9	71	23.4	21.4	75	63	59	38
Hispanic	114,697	18.7	60	19.6	17.4	49	26	35	13
White	895,588	22.1	64	22.9	20.4	77	49	61	33
Other/No Response	167,491	21.7	52	22.5	20.1	--	--	--	--
<b>All Students</b>	<b>1,421,941</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>28</b>

**NOTES:** An ACT core curriculum is four years of English and three or more years each of mathematics (starting with Algebra I), science, and social studies. In 2008, 11 percent of Wisconsin students did not identify their intended high school curriculum, and 8 percent of students nationally did not provide their high school course-taking plans during ACT registration. A benchmark score is the minimum score needed on an ACT subject-area test to indicate a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher grade in a corresponding college-level course. The science benchmark is for college-level biology.